a·70.

THE

Plain Man's

REPLY

TO THE

Missionaries.

It is agreed by all Catholicks, *that the Church is an* infallible *Witness and Guide. And* Protestants *profess, that if this could be made evidently appear, they would hold out in no Controversie at all. This therefore is to be made evident unto* Protestants. *This is the task of* Catholicks, *especially of* Catholick Missionaries. Cresly's Append. to Exomol. Cap. 4. ſ. 6.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

THE
Plain Man's
REPLY
TO THE
Catholick Miſsionaries.

Reverend Fathers,

I Have of late been very often admoniſhed; *To leave the Church of* England, *and embrace the Communion of the Church of* Rome.

When I have first made my acknowledgment for the kindness of your frequent visits; I do then presume, with an honest plainness, thus to declare my self.

Your design is to perswade me to change my Religion. Now *we Country-men*, you know, *do love a saving Bargain* If therefore I should be a *Roman Catholick*, what shall I be the better for't? What real Benefit and advantage shall I get by such a change?

And here pray do not mistake me.

It is not any Temporal advantage that I expect, by the Profession either of yours or any other Religion. If my Religion is my Interest, I do then bless God for it: and have cause to be truly thankful, that he gives me such an easie and comfortable Pas-

Passage through this vale of Tears. But if the free Publick exercise of my Religion, is not consistent with my worldly Interest; but doth expose me to Sufferings and Troubles: I must then remember that I am a Christian: And as such must chearfully take up my Cross, and follow my Blessed Saviour: *the Captain of our Salvation, who was made perfect through Sufferings. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatned not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* 1 Pet. 2. 23.

So that in short. When I do ask you; *What real benefit and advantage I shall get by being a Roman Catholick?* My meaning is plainly this. That since *the end of our Faith, is the Salvation of our Souls*; Shall I find better and more certain Directions in the

Church of *Rome*, how to save my Soul, than the Church of *England* can pretend to give me?

Particularly;

Can the Church of *Rome* more distinctly explain the Articles of the *Creed*; and will she give me a better Interpretation of the Holy *Scriptures*, out of which the Creed is taken? Will she better direct me how to subdue my vicious Inclinations? How to procure pardon of my Sins; and obtain the favour of God? If so! If these things can be solidly proved; it is then both my Interest and Duty to leave the *Church of England*, and embrace the Communion of the Church of *Rome*.

Now in order to my satisfaction, I must needs grant you have often told me, *That the* Church of Rome *is Infallible*. And that nei

neither the *Church of England*, nor any other Proteſtant Church can pretend to be ſo. And then you have with great Triumph demanded; Whether it is not moſt prudent, to ſubmit my ſelf to an Infallible Guidance?

To which I do thus humbly Reply.

You ſay, *Fathers*, that the *Church of Rome* is Infallible. But pray how do you prove it? And let me ſo far beg your favour, as not to think me impertinent, whilſt I put this task upon you. For though you may perhaps blame it as too much confidence in a *Catholick* of yours to ask queſtions upon this point, and may require an entire ſubmiſſion, rather than allow him to put in a *Why* or *Wherefore*, or truſt his Senſes, or conſult his Reaſon beyond your allowance; Yet *We*, *call* us what

you please for it, cannot forgo that *Right* we have as *Men* to examine a Doctrine before we receive it for Divine Truth. We naturally take this course in all weighty matters. And since I resolve (and I believe you'l say 'tis but reason I should) not to buy or swap a Horse unless I *see* and *try* him. I pray why should I forgo my Religion, or take up *yours upon Trust*?

Pardon me, *Sirs*, I am more tender of my Soul than to be so imposed on. I do therefore again very bluntly demand, How do you prove, that *The* Church of Rome *is Infallible*?

And for your encouragement, permit me further to tell you; That it is *your* Interest, as well as mine, to prove it at this time. For you have a great work lyes upon

upon you; even *the Converſion of Three Kingdoms*. And though *the Labourers are not few, yet the Harveſt is great*. It will therefore be your Prudence, to fix upon this ſhort and compendious method.

The particular points in Controverſie betwixt us, you know, are many. And it would take up a long time diſtinctly to debate them. But if you can convince me, that *your Church is Infallible*; you will then make ſhort work on't and prove them all at once.

For if your Church *cannot* Err, it muſt then be acknowledg'd that ſhe *hath not* Erred. And conſequently, whatever ſhe hath propoſed as an *Article* of *Faith*, it ought to be received as ſuch. So that prove this, and *All's your own*.

Now

Now in order to my Conviction let us distinctly examine what this *Infallibility* doth signifie. Which I hope doth not work by way of *Charm*; but if there is such a priviledge in your Church, doubtless it admits of a rational explication.

And though I find it very difficult to understand your Discourses about this matter (which are so various and uncertain, expressed with such diffidence and caution, that I can scarce think you believe it your selves) yet if there is any sence in this Proposition, *The* Church of Rome *is Infallible*, it must then denote one of these *two* Things:

1. The *Indefectibility* and *Duration*, Or

2. The

3. The *Infallible Direction* of that Church.

If only the former; Then the *Infallibility* of the *Church of Rome* doth signifie no more than this, *viz.*

It is a certain infallible Truth; That the *Church of Rome* shall never be extinct, shall never cease to be a Church. Christ hath *built her upon the Rock*; *and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.*

To which Interpretation of your Infallibility I make bold to Reply these *two* Things.

1. *It is not true.*

2. *It is not sufficient.*

As to the *First*; There are indeed many comfortable Promises; that

that the Church *Catholick* ſhall never be extinct. Chriſt hath promiſed to be *always with her to the end of the World.* And *the Gates of Hell* (or of Death) *ſhall not prevail againſt her.* i. e. Maugre all the malice of Men and Devils, the Church of Chriſt ſhall never wholly be deſtroyed. True Religion ſhall never be ſo far driven out of the World, but that it ſhall always have, ſome where or other, ſome that believe and profeſs it in all things neceſſary to Salvation.

But pray, *Fathers*, What's this to the *Church of Rome* ?

For though it is the noted miſtake of your *Writers*, to call the *Church of Rome* the Church *Catholick* (and then to apply all the Promiſes of Protection and Preſervation to her as ſuch) yet this is only their own con-

confident Suppoſal, without the leaſt manner of Proof.

Indeed the *Church of Rome* ſo far as ſhe is Orthodox and holds the *Catholick Faith*, ſo far ſhe may be truly called *A* Catholick Church. But ſo likewiſe may the *Church of England*, the Church of *Denmark*, or any other particular Church. But now to aſſert; That the *Church of Rome* (though ſhe were as Catholick in her Doctrine as ſhe can pretend) is *The* Catholick Church, excluſive of all others (beſides the uncharitableneſs of the opinion) is as great an impropriety of ſpeech as to affirm; *That a part is the whole*. Or; That one *ſingle* member, ſuppoſe a *Hand* or a *Foot*, is the whole Body.

Now that the *Church of Rome* is but a *particular* Church (a branch

branch and member of the Church *Catholick*, and as such may *ceaſe* and be *extinct*, as any other particular Church may) is plainly determined by S. *Paul.* Rom. 11. 18, 20, 21. *Boaſt not againſt the Branches: but if thou boaſt, thou bearest not the Root, but the Root thee ——— Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God ſpared not the natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee.*

In ſhort. *The* Church of Rome *hath no ſpecial Promiſe or Priviledge, above other particular Churches, of Immunity from falling; either from the purity of Faith, or the whole Faith it ſelf.*

If there is ſuch a Priviledge or Promiſe, let it then be produced, and I ſhall with the greateſt ſubmiſſion beg pardon for this miſtake.

But

But ſuppoſe this Expoſition of your *Infallibility* were *true*, yet

2. It is not *ſufficient*; as not anſwering thoſe ends, for which this Priviledge in your Church is pretended.

For let it be granted; That the *Church of Rome* is not only a true Church at preſent, but alſo ſhall ſtill ſo continue to the end of the World. What then?

Will you thence infer, That the Members of the *Church of England* are obliged to ſeparate from their own Church, and embrace the Communion of the *Church of Rome*?

As mean as my Education hath been, I hope you do not fancy, that

that I am thus to be impoſed on.

For even *my* ſlender Capacity can eaſily apprehend; That to prove the neceſſity of ſuch a *ſeparation*, you muſt not only tell me, That the *Church of Rome* is *a Church* (for ſo likewiſe is the *Church of England*) but you ought further to conſider the merits of the Cauſe it ſelf, by examining; The pretended *Defects* of the *Church of England* on the one hand: and the pretended *Priviledges* of the *Church of Rome* on the other. Of which I ſhall add nothing further at preſent. But ſhall only deſire you to obſerve; That *A true Church may be a corrupt Church.* As a Man may be *truly* a Man, and yet may be very dangerouſly ſick.

But will you thence affirm; Becauſe ſuch a poor Patient ſtill retains

retains the *Eſſence* and *Being* of a Man, that it is therefore my Duty to change condition with him? If you and I were in two Boats, and yours let the Water in to the hazzard of your life, can you think it fit that I ſhould run out of my own into yours, becauſe you could aſſure me it was a *true Boat* or *truly* a Boat ſtill?

The Application is eaſie; and pray, *Fathers*, make it to your ſelves.

I hope you are now fully convinced, that this *firſt* notion of *Infallibility* will do you little Service. Let us therefore proceed to examine the

Second, viz. *The Infallible Direction of the* Church of Rome. Which your Writers do commonly thus explain.

That

That since the wisdom of God, for the direction of his Church in Faith and Worship, hath revealed his will in Scripture and Traditions; and since both Scripture and Tradition are liable to be misunderstood, and the sence of them mistaken: to secure Christians from Error, there is a living Infallible Judge, constituted and appointed by Jesus Christ, to determine all Controversies in matters of Faith; and to explain all difficult Places of Scripture. And that those, and those only, who submit themselves to this Infallible Judge, are the true members of the Catholick Church: But that all others, whether Protestants, Hugonots, or however else denominated, who reject this Judge, are Heretick's and Schismaticks.

The

This is the ſubſtance of what your Authors ſay on this occaſion. Particularly a late Treatiſe, called *Seek and you ſhall find*: Printed by *H. Hills*, *Permiſſu Superiorum*, doth thus declare, *p. 6.* '*It is manifeſt this bare Writing* '(the Scripture) *without ſome* 'living *Judge to interpret it, can* 'never end Controverſies, nor ſecure-'ly teſtifie to us what we muſt 'adhere to, in caſe of difficulties ari-'ſing from the meaning of the words. 'It remains then neceſſary there 'ſhould be ſome Supreme Judge or 'Court of Judicature, amongſt them 'who have embraced that Religion; 'to the Sentence of which every one 'muſt be obliged to ſubmit, and 'conſequently it muſt be ſecured from 'Errour in it.

It ſeems then, *Fathers*, an Infallible Judge is neceſſary up-

on

on these *two* accounts. 1. To interpret the Scripture. 2. To end Controversies.

That I may therefore neither *wrest the Scriptures to my own Destruction*; nor make a *Schism* in the Church, by holding any Doctrine contrary to the Catholick Faith; Pray, *Fathers*, resolve me; *Who is this Infallible Judge*; that so upon occasion I may consult him? *Who is this unerring Guide*; that so I may submit my self to his Conduct? Pray give me a distinct and particular Answer to this important Question. And do not any longer trifle with me in so weighty a concern. Do not think to satisfie my Scruples by affirming; That it is sufficient, for such an ignorant Man as I am, to know; *That the Church is Infallible*; and that all further Inquiries are wholly need-

needleſs in ſo plain a matter.

I ſay this is not ſufficient, unleſs you can particularly reſolve me; Who it is that hath the management of this Priviledge in your Church.

Tell me therefore diſtinctly; *Who is this Infallible Guide?* Where may I find him? And that my Propoſal is pertinent and proper, I do thus convince you.

Suppoſe I am travelling to a certain Town: And do ask the next Man I meet, Which is the right way? Who tells me it's a very croſs Road to find, and I may eaſily miſs it. But, ſaith he, though I cannot direct you my ſelf, yet there is a Man lives in that *Village*, who knows every ſtep ſo exactly; that if you take him for your *Guide*, you cannot poſſibly be miſtaken. B Pray

Pray, Friend, ſay I, At what Houſe doth this honeſt Man live? What is his Name? How may I come to the ſpeech of him? What manner of Man is he, ſhould I happen to meet him? Nay! ſaith he, I know nothing of all that, but you muſt find him as you can.

Now ſuppoſe every Man in the Village gives me the ſame wiſe Anſwer, what an admirable Direction would this prove?

This is our very Caſe.

We are all Strangers and Pilgrims in this World: Travelling towards that happy Place; the *Heavenly Jeruſalem.* For direction in our Journey, God hath given us a *Chart* or *Map*, the *HOLY SCRIPTURES. Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are*

they which teſtifie of me. John 5. 39.

But now the *Church of Rome* tells me, That theſe *Scriptures* are a very imperfect and uncertain Direction: *In which there are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which the unlearned and unſtable wreſt to their own Deſtruction.*

And therefore I am admoniſhed, not to meddle with theſe *Scriptures* my ſelf, which are very dangerous things, but to reſign both them and my own Judgment into the hands of the *Church*, and then I am ſafe. For the Church being *Infallible*, can infallibly interpret all difficult Places of Scripture: and can furniſh me with ſuch a Guide as will *certainly* direct me.

Upon this peremptory Summons, it is my repeated requeſt; That you would particularly inſtruct me in a matter of ſuch great Concernment.

Tell me diſtinctly who this Guide is, and I do again faithfully promiſe to reſign my ſelf to his conduct.

For I do firmly aſſure you, *Fathers*, I am ſo far from declining Conviction (the uſual Objection againſt Proteſtants) that I have diligently inquired after this *Infallible Guide* in all places, and in all Companies. I have not only propoſed this Queſtion to the learned Men of your Church in perſonal Diſcourſe; but have alſo given my ſelf the freedom to read ſuch of your Authors, as I thought moſt likely to inſtruct me. More eſpecially

eſpecially I have had the curioſity to read the Stories of your eminent *Converts*. Who generally pretend to have left the *Church of England*, for want of ſuch an infallible Guide, which they fancy to have found in the *Church of Rome*.

Maſter Waddeſworth complains to his old friend *Biſhop Bedell*, That this, amongſt other Motives, did occaſion him to forſake the *Church of England*, viz. *the want of a certain, humane, external, infallible Judge to interpret Scripture, and define Queſtions of Faith without error*. p. 328. And *Mr. Croſſy* gives this Reaſon of his Converſion to *Rome*; Becauſe the *Church of England* is a *fallable* and a *fallible* Church. *Append. to Examol. p.* 480.

Now since *Mr. Cressy* doth more particularly treat of the *Infallibility* of the *Church of Rome* (it being the whole design of his *Exomologesis* to explain and defend it) I did with great exactness observe that Discourse. Wherein I could not but take particular notice of these memorable words. p. 501.

'*When it is said*, The Church 'is Infallible, *though this be com-* 'monly *understood of all the whole* 'Church *in general*; *yet*, *when we* 'say, She is an infallible Guide; 'it *is most ordinarily understood of* 'the *Church*, *speaking by some Autho-* 'rised *Person or Persons*, *representing* 'the *whole Body*.

Here, *Fathers*, I did rationally expect; that Mr. *Cressy* should have particularly declared; Who this infallible Representative is.

What

What a fair opportunity was here offered distinctly to instruct us in this weighty matter? And therefore you must needs allow me to be surprized at his following Concession.

'*About this Representative there* '*is diversity of opinions among Ca-* '*tholicks.*

Which in plain terms is this, *Catholicks are not yet agreed who is this Infallible Guide.*

And now, *Fathers*, pray consider how you have trifled with me.

You call hard upon me, to leave the *Church of England.* I ask you, Why? Because otherwise, *say you*, You cannot hope to be saved. For *without Faith it is impossible to*

please God; And the *Church of England* hath no Faith.

But why, *Fathers*, hath she no Faith? Doth she not believe the antient Creeds? And doth she not acknowledge those very Scriptures out of which those Creeds are taken?

That's true. But, Alas, these signify nothing. Because she hath no *infallible Guide* to direct her, how to understand these Scriptures, or to interpret those Creeds. I do then demand; Where such a Guide may be found? You say, *In the Church of Rome.* I do next very pertinently ask you; *Who is this unerring Guide; that so, by submitting my self to his directions, I may receive the benefit of his conduct?*

And

And what ſhuffling Anſwers you do give me to ſo plain a Queſtion, I am even aſtoniſhed to repeat.

And now, *Fathers*, though what I have already propoſed is too juſt a prejudice againſt your Church (for if you cannot agree amongſt your ſelves, there is little hope you ſhould ſatisfie me) yet further to convince you, how deſirous I am, if poſſible, of an happy Accommodation, I do thus proceed in my inquiry.

You have already granted;
That this *Infallible Guide* is ſome Authoriſed Perſon or Perſons repreſenting the whole Body.

Let us therefore impartially examine; Who is this infallible *Repreſentative* in your Church?

Which certainly can be no other but one of these *Two*.

1. His *Holiness* the *Pope*. Or,

2. A *General Council*.

As to the *First*; I have been told that though the *Jesuits*, the *Canonists*, and such like Court-Parasites, have said much for it; yet it is generally esteemed, by the more sober and learned Catholicks, a very weak and ungrounded opinion; and as such is usually rejected.

Wherein the PAPIST REPRESENTED (who I suppose speaks the sence of your whole Party here in *England*.) doth thus fully instruct us *p.* 42.

'Though

'Though ſome do allow him '(the POPE) the aſſiſtance of 'a *Divine Infallibility*, without 'being in a *General Council*, yet 'he is ſatisfied, 'tis only their *o-* 'pinion, and not their *Faith*. 'There being no obligation from the 'Church, of aſſenting to any ſuch 'Doctrine.

From whence I do obſerve;

That a *Papiſt* truly *Repreſented* is ſatisfied; *The Pope is not infallible.* And indeed, *Fathers*, ſo am I. Thus far then we are agreed.

Let us now proceed with the ſame Candour to examine the pretences of a *General Council.*

Which I might very briefly, and yet very effectually [thus diſpatch.

1. If General Councils confirmed by the Pope have actually erred.

2. If General Councils confirmed by Popes, have made Definitions and Decrees plainly contradictory one to the other.

3. If a General Council confirmed by one Pope, hath been condemn'd by a General Council, confirmed by another Pope: Then, *Fathers*, I hope you will be forced to acknowledge, unless Contradictions can be true, That *a General Council is not infallible.*

As to the truth of these particulars; the *Divines* of the *Church of England* have clearly proved them to you, beyond possibility of a Reply. And are still ready to refresh your memories when you shall desire it.

As

As to my ſelf, Becauſe ſuch enlargement doth require more skill, in *Eccleſiaſtical* Story, and the Records of the *Church*, than can be expected from a Perſon of my mean Capacity; I ſhall therefore wave that kind of proof. And ſhall thus give you my thoughts, in a more plain and familiar manner.

You ſay, *Fathers*, that a General Council is this infallible Judge, this unerring Guide. Let me therefore aſk you this ſhort Queſtion:

Is there any General Council at this Day actually now ſitting, in any part of the Chriſtian World?

I am ſure you cannot pretend that there is. And if not, Then there is no *Living* Infallible Guide in the preſent *Church of Rome*.

I have propoſed this Scruple to ſome of your Learned Men: and the Anſwer they have returned is this (which if you do not like, pray give me a better) *viz.* That though there is no Council actually now ſitting, as to their Perſons; yet there are many Councils ſtill extant in their Doctrines. Thoſe Reverend Fathers do ſtill live in their *Canons* and *Decrees*. Which being committed to Writing by faithful Scribes and Notaries: And authentick Copies thus taken, they were thence publiſhed for the Direction of the Church in all ſucceeding Ages.

To which I do thus humbly Reply.

How often, *Fathers*, have you told us; That *no meer Writing can be a Judge* (this being the very reaſon why you deny that Capa-

Capacity to the *Holy Scriptures.*)

' For by a Judge, all wiſe Men ' underſtand a Perſon endued with ' Life and Reaſon; able to hear, ' to examine, to declare his mind ' to the diſagreeing Parties. Which ' no meer Writing, which is deaf, ' dumb, and inanimate can be able ' to do.

V. *Charity maintained by Catholicks.* Cap. 2. §. 3. p. 42.

So that theſe Canons being but a *Writing*, they may indeed be a *Rule*, but they cannot be a *Judge.*

And hereupon, for my better ſatisfaction, pray reſolve me theſe *Queries.*

1. Suppoſe a Controverſie ſhould ariſe about the *Canons* of any Council, how and in what ſence they are to be underſtood; can ſuch

Decrees

Decrees determine themſelves and explain their own meaning?

If ſo, then

2. Why muſt not the ſame Priviledge be granted to the *Holy* Scriptures? Why cannot the Writings of God judge and determine Controverſies, as well as the Writings of Men?

3. Whether cannot the Spirit of God, by which the *Scriptures* were indicted, expreſs his mind as plainly and intelligibly as the Fathers of any Council?

But now if you are forced to grant (and I do not ſee how you can avoid it) That when the Decrees of any Council ſhall be controverted, there muſt be ſome living Judge to determine ſuch Difference: I am then ſtill to *ſeek*, what I doubt I *ſhall* never *find*.

For

For after all this ſearch; and the moſt ſtrict and diligent attention to your learned Inſtructions; the Subſtance of what you have ſaid in the matter is no more than this.

The Church of Rome *is Infallible.*

That's certain. 'Tis Hereſie to doubt it.

But what this *Infallibility* ſignifies? Whence you your ſelves had it? Or, where we Proteſtants (who are ſo much upbraided with the want of it) may find it?

What Controverſies hath it decided? What Texts of Scripture hath it explained? What differences hath it compoſed?

Theſe, *Fathers*, are ſome of thoſe Queſtions, which at your beſt leiſure I deſire you to reſolve me.

F I N I S.

Books lately Printed for Ric. Chiſwell.

THE Hiſtory of the Reformation of the *Church of England*, by *Gilbert Burnet*, D. D. in two Volums, *Folio*.

The Moderation of the *Church of England*, in her Reformation, in Avoiding all undue compliances with *Popery* and other ſorts of *Fanaticiſms*, &c. by *Timothy Puller*, D. D. *Octavo*.

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A Discourse concerning the Celebration of Divine Service in an Unknown Tongue, *Quarto.*

A Papist not Misrepresented by *Protestants*. Being a Reply to the Reflections upon the Answer to [A Papist Misrepresented and Represented] *Quarto.*

An Exposition of the Doctrine of the *Church of England* in the several Articles proposed by the late *BISHOP* of *CONDOM* in *his* Exposition of the Doctrine of the *Catholick Church.*]

An Answer to *THREE PERS* lately printed concerni the Authority of the *Catholi Church* in matters of Faith, an the Reformation of the *Church of England*; *Quarto.*

A *CATECHISM* Explaining the Doctrins and Practices of the *Church of Rome*; with an Answer thereunto, by a *Protestant* of the *Church of England*; *Octavo.*

An

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